

## **CIVSoc INTERNATIONAL TOUR TO BERLIN - Spring Tour 2008**

**Berlin Tour Attendees:** 66 Members and 1 Non-member

**Dates:** 26th-2nd February 2009

### **Introduction**

For the past seven years CivSoc has organized international tours across Europe. The tours form the highlight of the CivSoc calendar and have the purpose of broadening interest and aspirations of Civil Engineering students. The tours also give our students a revealing insight into the diverse range of aspects of major engineering projects that the academic course doesn't include, enabling them to place engineering in a broader and international perspective. They have proven to give excellent motivation for students to seek out challenging and rewarding careers in construction, rather than to use their degree in another field.

Motivated by the popularity of previous tours and aided by increased industrial sponsorship, CivSoc last year increased the number of places available on the tour by forty percent.

### **This year's tour**

Very early Thursday morning, sixty six students embarked on a tour to Berlin. On arrival to the airport the tour received travel cards for the day. Previous tours employed the services of a coach however travel cards were seen to be a cheaper option that allowed the attendees to have the freedom during the night travel to which ever venue they wished.

Once everyone had checked into the hostel the tour travelled to the T.V. Tower, an old converted relic that stands as a bold reminder of communist occupation. Here the students could appreciate the expanse and diversity of the city they were about to explore. The group was joined by Hayden Nutall, a Design director from Atkins, who added professional insight into the site we saw and answered any questioned posed to him by the undergraduates.

The following day was the visit to Berlin Brandenburg Flughafen, the new airport being built that will soon become Berlin's main airport. The tour was taken to a specially built tower that overlooked the construction site where they were told about the plans for the airport. The tour guide explained the logistics of the underground terminal and the new transport infrastructure being built beneath the runways.



**Figure 1** Students on a prototype bridge

Later that afternoon the students were lectured by Professor Mike Schlaich of Technische Universität Berlin on incorporating elegant design into structures which was followed by a tour of the university and structures laboratory. Here, the students tested a postgraduate's prototype bridge (pictured) made of carbon fibre strips just millimetres thick. Amazingly the bridge survived the combined weight of the tour group though the postgraduate had his doubts and was seen watching anxiously. Two students were also invited to test its dynamic resistance.

The student society at the University kindly invited the tour group to their on campus student union where Anglo-German relations were built over beer, dancing and wii tennis.

Saturday morning was left open for the students to explore Berlin sites. Some chose to view the Brandenburg Gate and the Holocaust Memorial while others decided to visit the Berlin Zoo. The afternoon brought the tour of the central station where the students learnt how problems, such as Berlin's high water level combined with the enormous loads imposed by the trains on the multiple floors, were solved.

The final day was the tour of the Olympic stadium. The students were able to see the historical structure up close, learn its history and see how it is used for today's sporting glamour.



**Figure 2 Students at the Olympic Stadium**

The union grant and trust money helped pay for expenses on accommodation, flights, travel cards, and the tours of the tower, stadium, station and airport. Unfortunately one student had to drop out due to personal problems while the other student could not get her student visa approved on time. Also a lecturer usually accompanies the tour but the whole department was busy during our tour dates.

However all those attending expressed their gratitude for an amazing trip. CivSoc would like to thank the student union and the IC trust for their generous contribution to enable such a successful tour.